

July 22, 1965

Dr. N. W. Pirie  
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Dear *Pirie*:

Thank you very much for your note about "Signs of Life". You might be amused to know that this was rejected for publication by Science. However, I think this probably reflects nothing more than the personal biases of an editor who has rather less than an enthusiastic approach towards space programs.

I am also enclosing a brief reprint of some work that epitomizes the point about the detection of optical activity. We have another note coming out soon showing how the mass spectrometer can be used to give a 2-channel ratio readout that automatically signals any resolvable optically active component. This system uses an artificial D,L mixture as a coupling reagent, one component of which is isotopically labelled.

I agree with you that the experiment you mentioned would be interesting. The obstacle may be the not completely formidable one of preparing useful amounts of L amino acids synthetically. At least that suggests why the problem hasn't been done already in a completely casual fashion.

I will send you the reprints of the Nature piece when they come in.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

PIRIE, N.W.

P-121